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NSC BRIEFING

12 August 1954

CHINA FLOOD

- I. Chinese Communists now admit flood damage amounts to major disaster.
  - A. Before, insisted things under control, damage slight.
  - B. Now admit 6% China's cultivated land flooded--this some 23,000 square miles, nearly size Indiana.
  - C. Most in rice-rich Central China; normally grows over 10% China's food.
- II. Peiping genuinely surprised.
  - A. Fooled by temporary Yangtze drop at Hankow--late July.

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B. But river rose again: by 10

August, all-time record

*at Hankow*  
height--57 feet (previous

high, in 1931 flood, 53-1/2  
feet).

III. 1931 flood worst in modern Chinese  
history.

A. Affected an area of 95,000  
square miles: did US \$1.3  
billion damage.

B. Washed out millions in cities,  
also 25 million farmers..

IV. Present food purchases abroad  
insufficient to meet disaster.

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NSA

A. [REDACTED] Peiping will  
buy 50,000 tons of Burmese  
rice.

B. But flood will cut crop by  
several million tons.

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- C. Moreover, Peiping committed to export 270,000 tons rice to Ceylon for rubber; 200,000 tons to USSR.
- V. Peiping's public admission flood damage suggests might now welcome foreign relief.
  - A. Earlier (1 August), had rejected Burmese offer.
  - B. Burmese ambassador was told Chinese "not in need of such help at this stage."
  - C. Soviet aid likely: Pravda first noted flood on 9 August.
  - D. Peiping's prestige in Orbit, Sino-Soviet "friendship" make gesture necessary.

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VI. Also precedent for Communist acceptance Western relief.

- A. East Germany, Hungary have accepted US flood relief, Rumania politely declined, Czechoslovakia has not replied. Hungary also accepted Dutch offer of 50,000 guilders (US \$13,000).
- B. East German propaganda plays acceptance of US offer as expression policy of "furthering...international understanding."

VII. Peiping's position more awkward re possible US offer.

- A. Has always denied possibility of "genuine friendly aid" from US.

4  
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- B. Internal program relies more heavily on anti-American propaganda than do Satellites.
- C. Would certainly prefer aid from Orbit, Asian "neutrals" or other recognizing states.

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